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ABSTRACT

The issue of school closure has demanded the attention of most school districts serving large urban populations. Factors such as court mandates for desegregation, urban flight, diminishing financial resources, souring operational costs, and declining enrollments have added a mixture of unprecedented circumstances to the issue. The Cleveland School District, faced with many of these problems, needed to develop a school closing policy which effectively deals with them. The purpose of this report was to provide a better understanding of the developed school closing policy, actions, and future plans of the school district. The report focused upon four areas: (1) a literature search which revealed criteria used to determine previous school closings in urban school districts, (2) past actions of the Cleveland School District dealing with school closings, (3) the impact of desegregation on school closings, and (4) recommendations to help establish policy for the future. (Author/MK)

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# SCHOOL CLOSING POLICY REPORT

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Cleveland Public Schools

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The issue of school closure has demanded the attention of most school districts serving large urban populations. Factors such as court mandates for desegregation, urban flight, diminishing financial resources, soaring operational costs, and declining enrollments add a mixture of unprecedented circumstances to this issue.

The Cleveland City School District presently is faced with many of the above-mentioned problems. These complexities substantiate the need for the development of a school closure policy which will outline strategies for effectively dealing with the following tasks:

- Following mandated desegration guidelines
- Maintaining sound educational programs
- Reducing operating costs
- Reducing excessive building capacity

### Special Master's Recommendations

The special master, appointed by the Federal District Court to assist in the desegration process, recommended in the Remedial Order (February 6, 1978, page 7) the following:

- That the Cleveland City School District prepare a school closure study and submit by priority a list of schools to be closed based upon that study
- That any reduction in capacity effected in the district pursuant to further orders of the Court be accompanied by the reassignment of students from closed facilities in a desegregative manner to be approved by the Court

These recommendations must be reflected in any policy adoption and/or criteria established for closure of schools in the Cleveland City School District.

On August 23, 1979, therefore, the district adopted the following resolution for school closings:

> Because of declining enrollments, the Board of Education has closed numerous school buildings throughout the district in the past year. The Cleveland Board of Education directs that all school closings and/or openings hereafter shall be planned and implemented so as to be consistent with the Remedial Order adopted by the United States District Court.

## Purpose of Report

In order to provide a better understanding of the school closing policy and actions of the school district, this report has been prepared. The report focuses mainly upon:

- A literature search which reveals criteria used to determine previous school closings in urban school districts
- Past actions of the Cleveland school district dealing with school closings
- Impact of desegregation on school closings
- Recommendations to help establish policy for future local school closings

## II. LITERATURE SEARCH

A search of current literature contained in the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) related to school closures for the years 1974 through 1979 was made. This search provided information on the following topics:

- Procedures used to formulate recommendations for school closures
- Optimal elementary and secondary school size and methods of determining building capacity
- Cost-savings to school districts resulting from school closures
- Disposition of closed buildings

School Closing Advice

The literature review revealed that the topic of school closings is explosive in the community and within the school system. Frequently, the community has developed close ties with the neighborhood school, and subsequently feels threatened when a school is designated to be closed. Studies which have been made by educators offer suggestions for local boards of education to prepare the community for school closing decisions and formulate a viable district school closing policy.

John Pound offers a six-step approach to alleviate community resentment in regard to school closing.[1] According to Pound, a local school board should:

- Enumerate specific reasons for the closing of a specific building
- Publicize the above-mentioned information to the community
- Solicit the aid of a task force to research the needs and space requirements of the schools
- Arrange for public hearings on the school closing report
- Honor the request for any PTA meeting called to discuss the topic
- Make the decision for school closing and set a closing date

Presenting the information to the public is absolutely essential to reinforce the credibility of a board of education's action. In order to lessen community resentment, Robert L. Crowe has devised a series of procedures that attempt to calculate which schools are economically desirable to close and least threatening in terms of fanning the fire of community resentment.[2]

These procedures, which attempt to generate an objective rating scale, are:

- List everything that might influence your decision
- Rate these factors according to their importance
- Identify your alternatives

- Evaluate the feasibility of each alternative
- Make a tentative choice of the alternative that seems most logical
- Assess the possible consequences of your decision
- Make a final choice that seems most logical and least threatening
- Take steps to reduce the adverse effects of your final decision

(See Attachment A for a detailed explanation of Crowe's plan.)

The results of these ratings, which provide a basis for school closing decisions, are then presented to the community.

Crowe's study of 20 school districts reveals that school closings may:

- Decrease the viability of a neighborhood
- Diminish support for public education
- Produce racial isolation[3]

Closed buildings often become neighborhood eyesores. Vandalized abandoned buildings can be a haven for delinquents, and could create a very undesirable neighborhood situation.

Just as the community reacts with negative feelings toward closing schools, so do school officials and staffs. Reduction or reassignment of staff creates tension in the schools which must be abated before the stress level affects the classroom performance of teachers.

This sensitive topic of staff reduction was studied by the North York Department of Educational Research and Development. This study included 25 school districts and the following recommendations were made for reducing staff:

- Encourage early retirement
- Redeploy staff
- Lower the pupil-teacher ratio
- Liberalize the leave policy
- Conduct ongoing study of job categories
- Eliminate some supervisory and administrative positions
- Lay off personnel[4]

Since the topic of school closings so personally affects both the community and school personnel, the procedures used to determine closure must include both groups. Dr. Don Thomas , superintendent of the Salt Lake City Schools, recognizes both groups in his recommendations.[5]

He states that community support is vital in determining sites for closure. He believes that problems must be communicated to the public and this process includes inviting the PTA and media to school board meetings. This recommendation is seconded by Delbert Fowler who outlines the following procedures for keeping the public informed:

- Organize citizens' committees
- Use local consultants
- Utilize nationally recognized experts
- Prepare demographics
- Survey the community
- Utilize staff personnel
- Release information
- Involve the media[6]

Before boards of education can disseminate information to the public, certain statistics and research should be available. Fredrickson recommends that school boards:

- Evaluate present programs in light of current statutory regulations, educational trends, and innovations
- Appraise the structural qualities of existing school facilities
- Conduct annual preschool census and district-wide enrollment projections
- Conduct community-wide surveys to determine the economic growth potential
- Prepare for purchase, lease, or sale of school sites and buildings
- Investigate modern architectural innovations
- Develop educational specifications for future projects
- Develop an ongoing public dissemination program of the school districts' activities and objectives7

In like manner, the Kansas City Board of Education has adopted a policy statement that covers both administrative and board action. The school system's administration ranks schools in the fall of every year and the local board of education established a Local Evaluation Committee for each school or cluster. This committee which will be composed of both administrative and community members will issue a report to the local board which will:

- Suggest reasonable alternatives
- Determine eduational quality of alternatives
- Analyze factors such as cost, enrollment projections, and other pertinent details
- Identify other uses for the facility
- State probable community reaction
- Indicate committee preferences and dissenting views[8]

The report of any committee should contain building capacity information. The usual method of determining building capacity involves multiplying pupil/teacher ratio by the number of available teaching stations.[9] (The Cleveland Board of Education currently is attempting to utilize buildings at 85% or more capacity level.)

After determining the capacity/use ratio, a local board will explore cost-saving remedies. Schools that have fewer than 300 pupils will be studied as potential sites for closure.

Although savings can be realized from the closure of schools, many expenditures must still be included in the budget. Mothballing a building, maintaining security, and making necessary repairs are items that cannot be neglected while a local board still owns the building.[10]

A board of education must decide whether the factors that suggest savings, in reality, do so. Computation of operational costs minus maintenance and security costs should provide an approximate savings figure.

Once the decision has been made to close a building, a board of education must develop plans to deal with the vacant buildings. Pasnik believes that a team of experts consisting of an educational planning consultant, an architect, and a real estate agent should survey the building for potential usage.[11] An inventory of all the schools should include room dimensions, plumbing and heating/air-conditioning details, condition of building, age, site acreage, location, zoning information, and potential uses for the buildings.[12]

Realizing that "boards have a moral obligation to their community to realize the maximum return possible on their investment in a school,"[13] a board has several options open to it. They are leasing, renting, selling, or demolishing the buildings. Suggested utilization of buildings includes renting to governmental agencies, private schools, or libraries so that a board may still own the property.

Hickey suggests that to dispose of all closed schools may be unwise, because a change in demographics may result in that property being needed at a future date.[14]

All of these studies emphasize that the key to successful closure of schools is long-range planning. Studies of the birth rate, demographic changes, and shortages of energy resources affect both the use and construction of the future school building. If a board of education requests planning advice from consultants, utilizes that advice, and develops a definite school closing policy, sound school closing decisions will result.

## III. PAST DISTRICT SCHOOL CLOSINGS

On December 7, 1976, the Federal District Court issued guidelines and instructions for desegregation planning in Cleveland. Pursuant to these Court instructions, the State Board of Education and the Cleveland Board of Education submitted plans for desegregation in the Cleveland schools. The closure of schools to facilitate implementation of desegregation plans was a part of both the local district and state plans.

The events that have taken place since the December 7, 1976 Court Order in regard to school closings are outlined in this section.

January 18, 1977 -- The Cleveland Board of Education and the Ohio Board of Education filed desegregation plans with the Court which specified certain school closings. The state plan proposed the closing of 10 schools, while the local district plan recommended the closure of five schools.

February 10, 1977 -- The Cleveland Board of Education's plan for desegregation was rejected by the Federal Court, which promptly ordered the school district to prepare a second plan.

February 25, 1977 -- The Cleveland Board of Education submitted the second plan for desegregation implementation. This plan proposed the closure of the same schools listed in the local district's first plan. They are Fruitland, Stanard,, Quincy and Washington Irving Elementary, and Addison Junior High School.

May 9, 1977 -- The Cleveland Board of Education submitted a third plan for desegregation. This revised list of proposed school closings included the following seven elementary schools: Fruitland, John Burroughs, Murry Hill, Paul Bellamy, Quincy, Stanard, and Wooldridge.

June, 1977 -- At the special master's hearing on a proposed school closure plan, the state expert recommended that 21 to 22 schools be closed to maximize the efficient utilization of the facilities in the Cleveland school district.

June 12, 1977 -- The Cleveland Board of Education filed a motion to close the seven schools already listed (May 9), plus one other, Addison. These closings were proposed solely for economic reasons.

August 26, 1977 -- The Federal District Court denied the local district's motion to close the above-mentioned schools because the proposed closings and reassignment of students did not appear to be consistent with the school district's obligation to remedy the Constitutional violations found by the Court in its order of August 31, 1976.

August 30, 1977 -- The Cleveland Board of Education filed a motion for reconsideration to permit the closing of these three schools: Stanard, Quincy, and Addison. The Federal District Court granted permission to close these schools, provided that student reassignment be to integrate classrooms in safe, secure settings. The Board, however, decided to repair these buildings and keep them open.

September 30, 1977 -- The special master recommended that the Cleveland City School District and the Ohio Board of Education complete a study of space utilization in the local school system on a school-by-school basis. A school closing priority list was to be submitted to the Court by November 30, 1977. Specific criteria were recommended for the study by the special master. He directed that the criteria to be applied by the school district include:

- The five-year enrollment projection to be made pursuant to the court order (due by October 31, 1977)
- A saturation analysis

- The relationship of the school's educational program to the physical environment
- Facility evaluation based upon specific criteria
- Facility utilization policies
- Transportation relationship
- Staffing pattern

November 30, 1977--A School Closure Study was submitted to the Court. In this report, 15 schools were recommended for closure. They are:

- Fruitland Elementary
- William H. McGuffey Elementary
- Dawning Elementary
- John Burroughs Elementary
- Quincy Elementary
- Wooldridge Elementary
- Edward M. Williams Elementary
- Stanard Elementary
- Murray Hill Elementary
- Paul Bellamy Elementary
- Crispus Attucks Elementary
- Oliver W. Holmes Elementary
- Barkwill Elementary

* * * *

- Addison Jr. High
- Kennard Jr. High

All of the above-mentioned schools had these characteristics:

- Had shown steady decline in enrollment
- Had no forseeable growth in enrollment
- Were within walking distance of other neighborhood schools
- Had neighborhood schools with the capacity to absorb more children without overcrowding
- Were near schools in as good or better condition
- Were among the least cost-efficient

December 21, 1977 -- The special master requested the court to make supplemental orders regarding the school closure report. These supplemental orders included:

- Possible senior high school closings
- List of all schools in the system without adequate facilities for the preparation and storage of food
- List of all schools without adequate facilities to provide physical fitness and recreation activities
- A written analysis of each school in the local district regarding all criteria used in preparing School Closure Study of November 30, 1977
- List of all schools being considered for use as specialized facilities for handicapped pupils

- The energy cost per square foot per year for the calendar year of 1976 and for 11 months of 1977 for each school
- A table showing the percentage of students on ADC in each school
- Most recent test scores in reading and math for students in each school
- Tables which show line-item expenditures for every school in the local district in these areas: general fund expenditures, DPPF expenditures, Title I expenditures, and all other Federal fund disbursements for the calendar year 1976 and 1977

January 5, 1978 -- The Cleveland Board of Education submitted supplemental information requested by the Court regarding school closings (12/21/77).

January 24, 1978 -- The Cleveland City School District submitted the Recommended Cost Reduction Report for the district. One of the recommended cost-reduction steps was the proposal to increase the number of schools recommended for closure to 30 instead of the 15 proposed in the November 30, 1977 report.

February 6, 1978 -- The Federal District Court issued the Remedial Order and the Remand Opinion. This Remedial Order indicated that the number of schools proposed for closing by the Cleveland City School District was insufficient in number in light of the severe financial problems facing the system. The Remedial Order further stated that the local district's school closure proposals were not made pursuant to any well-considered plan.

February 22, 1978 -- A series of computer programs were produced by the Cleveland City School District establishing a school closing priority list for elementary, junior high, and senior high schools.

These factors were considered in establishing this school closing priority list:

- Enrollment change, 1970 - 1981
- Absolute number of unassigned pupil stations
- Percentage of pupil stations in use
- Instructional cost efficiency administration/pupil cost, 1976
- Instructional cost efficiency capacity per pupil cost, 1977

April 20, 1978 -- The Cleveland City School District compiled a list of additional schools to be considered for closure. In addition to the statistical data generated by the computer, location of the school also was considered. To apply only the statistical criteria would result in wide expanses of the city having no elementary schools located in them.

Those schools considered for closing are:

- East Madison
- Washington Irving
- Memorial
- Oliver H. Perry
- Hodge
- Tod
- Hazeldell
- Mound
- George Washington
- Garfield
- Doan
- Charles W. Chesnutt
- Tom L. Johnson
- Gilbert
- Mark Twain
- William Rainey Harper
- Mary B. Martin
- Washington Park
- Emile B. deSauze
- Boulevard
- McKinley
- Chesterfield
- Lawn
- Clara Tagg Brewer
- Sackett

May 26, 1978 --Recommendations for school closings were made to the special master by Dr. Charles W. Leftwich, Federal Court-appointed deputy superintendent for desegregation implementation. A total of 31 elementary schools and five junior highs were recommended. The complete list follows:

Elementary Schools

| | |
|---|---|
| Paul Bellamy | Puritas |
| Stanard | William Brett |
| Columbia | Hodge |
| Washington Irving | Quincy |
| Tod | Barkwill |
| Edward M. Williams | Charles Chesnutt |
| Murray Hill | Clara Tagg Brewer |
| Willard | Rosedale |
| Hannah Gibbons | Tom L. Johnson |
| William McGuffey | Memorial |
| Parkwood | Oliver W. Holmes |
| Wooldridge | John Burroughs |
| Harvard | Washington Park |
| Mark Twain | Dawning |
| Crispus Attucks | Fruitland |
| George Washington | |

Junior High Schools

| | |
|---|---|
| Addison | Rawlings |
| Kennard | William Dean Howells |
| Lulu Diehl | |

June 9, 1978 -- The report of school closings was sent to the Court. The Cleveland Board of Education, however, did not accept Dr. Leftwich's recommendations for school closure. This action left the proposal submitted to the Court on April 20, 1978, (in which it sought to close 25 elementary schools) in effect.

June 14, 1978 -- Dr. Leftwich was ordered by the Court to proceed in finalizing a desegregation plan. This plan was to take into consideration the 36 school closings recommended to the Court (May 26).

June 16, 1978 -- Dr. Leftwich informed the special master that it would not be possible to close five junior highs submitted on the list of 36 until the second stage of desegregation implementation. This left a total of 31 schools proposed for closure. The Remedial Order of February 6, 1978, was amended to include the reassignment of the students attending the 31 schools proposed for closure.

August 25, 1978--The Cleveland City School District was ordered by the Court to close as many schools as transportation services would permit.

August 30, 1978--The Cleveland City School District submitted a plan for the closing of schools and the reassignment of students. This plan had been approved by the Cleveland Board of Education on August 29, 1978, and proposed the closure of 19 schools.

The Cleveland City School District petitioned the court to authorize a plan which would close 24 elementary schools and two junior high schools. The complete list follows:

- Barkwill
- Clara Tagg Brewer
- Columbia
- Crispus Attucks
- Dawning
- Edward M. Williams
- Fruitland
- Hannah Gibbons
- John Burroughs
- Mark Twain
- Murray Hill
- Oliver W. Holmes
- Parkwood
- Paul Bellamy
- Puritas
- Quincy
- Rosedale
- Stanard
- Tod
- Tom L. Johnson
- Washington Irving
- Washington Park
- William H. McGuffey
- Wooldridge

* * *

- Lulu Diehl Jr. High
- Addison Jr. High

All of the schools, with the exception of Clara Tagg Brewer, previously had been identified and approved by the Court on June 16, 1978. These closings would increase the efficiency of the remaining school facilities, and thereby effect considerable financial savings for the school system.

October 23, 1978--Twenty-five elementary schools in the Cleveland City District were closed--William Brett was not. Students were reassigned to nearby schools.

December 20, 1978--The following criteria were developed under the direction of Dr. James Tanner, deputy superintendent, Administration, Cleveland Public Schools:

- No increase in racial segregation
- Availability of appropriate space in nearby buildings (those serving adjacent areas)
- Previous identification for closing
- Condition of the school building in comparison to other nearby schools
- Increased efficiency in facility utilization by decreasing numbers of small-enrollment schools
- Minimum feasible inconvenience to pupils and their families
- Consistency with desegregation objectives
- Availability of transportation, if required

An additional criterion for February:

- Avoidance of reassignment of pupils previously reassigned during the current school year because of school closings, as well as a review of capacity requirements in consideration of enrollment

The teachers' strike (beginning of 1978-79 school year) and changes in the personnel responsible for making recommendations for school closure affected the final outcomes of the decisions made for specific school closings.

September 9, 1979--As Phase I of desegregation implementation began, three elementary schools and two junior highs were closed. The elementaries are Memorial, George Washington, and William H. Brett. The junior highs are Kennard and Rawlings.

(changed 1/25/80)

## IV. DESEGREGATION IMPLEMENTATION IMPACT

The events that have taken place over the past two years, outlined in the previous section, have affected the status of school closings in the Cleveland City School District. On July 13, 1979, the Court adopted "Basic Guidelines for Planning for the Implementation of the Remedial Order." One of the critical tasks outlined in the guidelines was that of effecting a plan for school closures. The guidelines required the following actions:

- The Board adopts a policy statement
- The Superintendent develops a set of written administrative regulations setting forth goals
- The Deputy Superintendent for Desegregation Implementation develops a written plan which identifies the following tasks:
  - Production of a short-term and long-term enrollment projection report by residential zone and race
  - Generation of a school capacity report showing building capacity and current building enrollments
  - Production of a school facilities report which inventories current school buildings by age, size, location, needed repairs, advantages, and disadvantages
  - Recommendations for more cost-effective use of facilities, criteria to be used in closing schools, and possible alternative uses of closed schools

Many of these tasks have been completed according to the schedule outlined by Dr. Margaret Fleming, deputy superintendent, Department of Desegregation

(changed 1/25/80)

Implementation. By February 1980, a school facilities report including the following will be submitted:

- Inventory of current school buildings by age, size, location, needed repairs, advantages, disadvantages
- Recommendations for more cost-effective use of facilities
- Recommended criteria to be used in closing schools
- Identification of possible alternative uses of schools closed in the future

Information gained by completion of these task reports will provide the basis necessary for determining future school closings and pupil reassignment.

A review of school closure literature and a summary of school closing activities in the Cleveland school system since 1976 provide a basis for several conclusions and recommendations which follow in the final section of this report.

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The literature search reveals a definite need for all school boards to delineate school closing procedures and define a school closing policy statement that will promote better understanding between the board of education and the community. Since this is an issue of magnitude for all urban school districts which face declining school enrollments, Cleveland must formulate a policy that will foster an economically secure budgetary basis of operation. The Cleveland Board of Education's actions must reflect responsible fiscal management coupled with improvement of the educational programs in the schools. Such a policy must result in school closings.

At this time, the schools designated for closure by the various individuals (the special master, the deputy superintendent, and the previous deputy superintendent of desegregation implementation) must be given serious consideration for closing. [1]Such schools as Sowinski, Harvard, Willard, Whitney Young, and William D. Howells are recommended for closing. Martin Luther King is targeted for temporary closing and later reopening as a senior high vocational school.

[1]Hodge, Harvard, Willard and William D. Howells are recommended for closing under the June 16, 1978 court approved submission. Whitney Young has been proposed as a Major Work center for Kennedy-Marshall and Adams-Rhodes clusters. Martin Luther King has been retained as a junior high for the East cluster.

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Recommendation I--Policy Statement

The Board of Education will adopt a policy statement that includes the following criteria for closure of schools: declining enrollments, condition of the school building, age of the building, efficiency in use of school facilities, instructional cost-efficiency, proximity to other buildings within a given cluster, and consistency with Court-approved plan for desegregation.

All actions related to school closure should be undertaken without impairing the overall educational mission of the local school district. Basically, any sound action taken would improve the educational program of the district and increase its fiscal responsibility.

Recommendation II--Task Force

A Task Force should be organized to study the school closure issue and make recommendations for closing specific schools.

A review of current literature reveals that several school systems (Salt Lake, Seattle, and Birmingham) organized similar groups to study declining enrollments of their districts. These groups were structured to include community participation and school administrative staff input. Some of the resources used in studying the issues involved in making recommendations for school closure included enrollment projections, school capacity reports, and evaluative reports on conditions of the school buildings. The outcome from the Task Force studies was a listing of suggested school closings or alternative uses for facilities not needed in the district.

A closer look at the organization and operations of the committees (Task Forces) reveals some common characteristics. They are:

- Organizational structure allowed active community participation
- Committee members concentrated on a specific goal to evaluate the school districts' facilities in relationship to declining enrollment and to make recommendations for closure and/or alternative use of excess capacity

- Committee used specific criteria to evaluate the school facilities and make recommendations for use
- Committee used enrollment projections and school building evaluation reports formulating recommendations
- Committee had an established time line for task completion
- Committee had an established system of reporting final outcomes of study in the form of recommendations to the districts's superintendent and board of education members

Studies made by Kansas City, Seattle, and Salt Lake City reveal that procedures similar to those listed above were used in multiple school closings.

In Cleveland, a study was completed in November, 1977, which advocated utilizing the following list of procedures:

- Development of five-year enrollment projection for the entire school system on the basis of residential zone and race
- Identification of buildings for which enrollment forecasts indicate a significant decline in enrollment for 1978 and continuing decline through 1982
- Selection of major criteria for analysis of building status
- Establishment of an educational program/panel
- Organization of a facility evaluation team
- Compilation of data in various categories
- Presentation of findings to the superintendent of schools

This 1977 local study lists standards for operation of school facilities that are applicable to all school districts and, in particular, the Cleveland City School District. They are:

- All Cleveland school buildings should provide essential and desirable facilities to fulfill the educational mission of the Cleveland Public Schools.
- Certain Cleveland school buildings, particularly at the secondary level, should provide flexible facilities to accommodate a variety of programs and delivery systems related to the health and welfare of the students. Various laboratory programs in science, languages and the arts, workshop areas for vocational and technical programs, access study and storage areas for media centers, as well as auditorium spaces for the students, staff, and community

and the like--must be accommodated in these buildings. Special mechanical, electrical, and structural considerations may be required in particular buildings in order to support the specific programs.

- All Cleveland school buildings required adequate space for service, preparation, and storage of food in compliance with district and state standards for feeding programs.
- All Cleveland school buildings should house appropriate facilities to provide physical fitness and recreation activities.
- All Cleveland school buildings should be efficient in the consumption of energy resources.
- All Cleveland school buildings should be maintained and operated at appropriate levels of efficiency and cost effectiveness.
- All Cleveland school buildings must meet appropriate safety standards.
- All Cleveland school buildings should have appropriate facilities for accommodation of handicapped persons on the premises as well as to support mainstreaming of special education students.
- Certain Cleveland school buildings will require convertible and expandable facilities to accommodate highly specialized facilities for handicapped students requiring services which are not feasible for mainstreaming.

The Cleveland City School District has the responsibility of adhering to the mandates of the Federal Court in regard to desegregation. School closings must be consistent with desegregation implementation which already has taken place. In order to facilitate planning that would meet the requirements of the Court concerning desegregation and to maintain quality educational programs, an Education and Facilities Evaluation Committee should be established. This committee will be chaired by the deputy superintendent, Department of Desegregation Implementation, and consist of the following members:

- Deputy superintendent, Department of Desegregation Implementation
- Assistant superintendent, General Administration
- Assistant superintendent, Department of Curriculum and Instruction
- Director of secondary education
- Director of elementary education

- Directing principals (four)
- Business manager
- Representative of the Cleveland Teachers Union
- Representative of the Cleveland Council of Administrators and Supervisors
- Representative of the City of Cleveland Planning Commission
- Four representatives from the Greater Cleveland Growth Association
- Parent representative from each high school[1]
- Two representatives from Cleveland Council, PTA

This group would provide input to the superintendent and the Board of Education members. It would make joint recommendations concerning which schools would be the most economically feasible to close and would be least disruptive to ongoing educational programs.

A nationally recognized consultant team with a background in educational/school facilities usage will be retained to act as a primary resource to the committee.

The literature review suggests that the time necessary for the Facilities Evaluation Committee to complete its task will take from six months to a year, excluding the time needed to organize the committee.

Recommendation III--Public Input

Public meetings should be conducted before the Board makes the final decision regarding school closure.

Public meetings concerning school closure would establish the Board's credibility. Too often community response indicates a belief that a school board does not deal in an open, honest manner with the community. By discussing the issues in public, a school board will demonstrate a willingness to listen to community concerns. The parents, students, and media representatives should be made aware of these meetings. Mailers, news releases, and PTA notices should invite public participation.

[1]By direction of the President, Cleveland Board of Education, two representatives of the Cleveland Interchurch Council and Federation for Greater Community Planning were invited to serve on the panel.

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Once a decision has been made concerning the fate of a school, the board should abide by its decision in order to avoid any charge of indecisiveness on its part unless new evidence is brought forward.

Recommendation IV--Information Dissemination

Pupils, parents, and school staff, ideally, should be made aware of the closing decision one year in advance of projected closing. [1] Such an action will allow time for adjustments on the part of affected pupils and parents to new school situations. Receiving schools will have the necessary time to organize welcome sessions to ease some of the frustrations that often accompany change.

Recommendation V--Future School Use

Future use of the closed schools should be determined by the local school board, based upon recommendation of the Facilities Committee.

The board has an obligation to the public to determine that those buildings designated for closing will not be needed at a future date. Population projections should be conducted. Once the decision has been made that a building is not economically feasible to maintain, the board must list the potential uses in order to retain the best return from the public property. The board, representing the taxpayers, has an obligation to determine the most efficient use of the property.

Before the final decision concerning the building and property is reached, the school board should consult a team of expert consultants consisting of an architect, a realtor, and an appraiser. This group should study the property with a focus on these issues:

- Estimated cost to repair the structure to meet the needs of a declining enrollment
- Changes that would allow the housing of special programs
- Current market value of the building and the property
- Changes which could be made to make the building a marketable one

[1]Given the timeline of Phase I, II and III, this time period will be substantially reduced.

An inventory of the property and building should be readily available for the team of expert consultants. The inventory should be conducted on a yearly basis and include these items:

- Age of building and additions
- Condition of building
- Zoning restrictions
- Acreage
- Number of rooms
- Dimensions of rooms and hallways
- Parking facilities
- Heating system and its condition
- Air-conditioning (if applicable) and its condition
- Condition of plumbing
- Condition of electrical system

Once the team of experts has presented its findings to the school board, the board has the responsibility to determine the disposition of the property to ensure maximum return from the building and land. If a property is to be retained, the school board should consider these alternative uses:

- Housing special programs or projects
- Extending use of building for community centers
- Leasing or renting the facility to
  - Community groups
  - Private schools
  - Day-care centers
  - Pre-school centers
  - Governmental agencies
  - Libraries

- Remodeling the building and leasing apartments or offices
- Advertising the availability of the site
- Marketing the property in brochures, newspapers, and magazines
- Inviting contractors to view the facility
- Selling the building and the land

Following these recommendations will result in the formation of a board policy which will ensure optimum utilization of existing facilities and result in the wise disposal of vacated school properties.

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## FOOTNOTES

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Hickey, p. 29.

[14] Ibid.